

Alberta Federation of Labour

GETTING SERIOUS: THE ROLE OF UNIONS IN ALBERTA'S CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

“It’s important to have institutions that can act as counterweights to the power of big money. And unions are among the most important of these institutions.”

Paul Krugman, Nobel Prize Winning Economist, February 2011

Introduction

Over the past five or six years, the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) has significantly improved its ability to influence the debate over important issues of public policy within the province.

Issues like workplace health and safety, the use (and abuse) of temporary foreign workers and the job implications of exporting raw bitumen were our issues first – but they have now become major items for discussion by policy makers, the media and the broader public.

The labour movement, through the AFL, its affiliates and its allies, has also been instrumental in shaping public debate on a wide range of other issues including, but not limited to, the following:

- Health care
- Pension reform
- Provincial budgets and public services
- Minimum wage
- Oil and gas royalties
- Green jobs
- Rights for farm workers

The AFL’s success in placing more of the labour movement’s key issues on the agenda for public debate has not been accidental. The AFL’s officers and staff have very consciously been using the resources provided to them by affiliates to change the “political climate” in Alberta and make that climate more conducive to the ideas and

suggestions put forward by working people. The AFL has been doing this by doing work in five key areas:

- **Research and Analysis:** The AFL puts a priority on getting its facts straight. Considerable effort and resources are expended on doing research that is thorough, practical and easy to understand. We believe that good research is vital to building credibility on issues that matter to labour and credibility is key to winning over the broader public. *Examples:* AFL research publications on oil sands, temporary foreign workers, green jobs, pensions, minimum wage, workplace health and safety, and revenue for public services.
- **Communicating through the Media:** The AFL has become much more aggressive, focused and sophisticated in communicating labour's core messages – both to our own members and the broader public. Internally, we communicate to union members through our website, our magazine (Union), our e-newsletter (LabourBytes), new media vehicles (Facebook, Twitter) and more traditional means like mail outs and word-of-mouth.

Externally, we have been very successful in getting coverage for a wide range of labour issues in the mainstream media. Major print and broadcast media outlets regularly report our positions in news stories, and we've also been quite successful in placing guest columns in major newspapers. All of these efforts have paid off: On issues that matter to labour, we have been helping shape the debate.

One of our key goals in communicating with the public is to change the “frames” through which Albertans understand key issues. For decades, the dominant script for discussion of public policy issues has been written by conservatives. We very consciously aim to develop progressive scripts and frames for issues that matter to Albertans. *An example of recent success:* Convincing both the Calgary Herald and Edmonton Journal editorial boards to endorse labour's position on expanding CPP.

- **Direct Lobbying of Decision Makers:** In addition to our work with the media, we have also improved our ability to influence public policy by increasing our efforts to directly lobby key decision makers. The AFL's officers regularly meet with cabinet ministers and key bureaucrats (DMs, ADMs, officials from the LRB and the WCB, etc.) The AFL also organizes “breakfast briefings” for MLAs on issues of key concern to labour.

We have also been organizing “labour lobby days” at the Legislature in which groups of labour leaders and activists meet with MLAs and cabinet ministers to discuss our concerns and suggestions on policy issues. Much of this work is still in its early stages – but the positive responses we've been getting both from lobbyists (our members) and the lobbied (MLAs) suggest it's worth continuing.

- **Coalitions and Partnerships:** One of the major lessons learned by the labour movement over the past few decades is that we can magnify our strength on issues that matter to our members by working in cooperation with like-minded groups and individuals from outside the labour movement. This was true when churches mobilized to support workers on the Gainers picket lines in the 80s. It's been true for 25 years with our involvement with Friends of Medicare, which brings unions together with seniors, students and other concerned citizens. And it's still true today.

Recent examples of magnifying our strength through coalitions include: The work we've done on pension reform (working in cooperation with seniors and student groups); green jobs (working in cooperation with environmental groups); temporary foreign workers (working in cooperation with immigrant groups and faith groups); and the efforts to stop a return to Klein-style cuts in the provincial budget (working in cooperation with other unions and community groups under the umbrella of Join Together Alberta). Another important example of partnership is the work we do with progressive academic think tanks like the Parkland Institute and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA).

- **Direct Action:** On occasion, it's necessary to step outside the box of polite political discourse and consider taking more direct (some might say more militant) action on issues that matter to working people. Rallies, sit-ins, marches, demonstrations: These are the kind of actions that are sometimes necessary to get the attention of the powers-that-be.

Obviously, we can't and shouldn't take this kind of action every day or on every issue. But as what's been happening recently in the Middle East proves, when large segments of the public feel strongly about a particular issue and are motivated to action, the results can be dramatic – and in some cases, they can be transformational. *Examples from Alberta's recent past:* Rallies against the Third Way; demonstrations against Bill 11; the Calgary Laundry Workers strike.

The Limits of Lobbying

The AFL is committed to continuing and improving upon the work we've been doing to bring labour's issues to the table. This means continuing to do considerable amounts of work in the five areas mentioned previously (research, communication, lobbying, coalition building and direct action).

But the very experience that has brought us some measure of success in terms of raising the concerns of working people and introducing more progressive "scripts" for understanding issues has reminded us that there are very real limits to what can be accomplished through lobbying and other forms of public pressure.

To put it bluntly, when confronted with decision makers who have already made up their minds, lobbying and public pressure can only accomplish so much.

A good example of this can be seen in the work we did on pension reform. We were championing a policy solution (expanding CPP) that was endorsed by the experts and widely supported by the public. We even managed to convince the Calgary Herald editorial board to come on side. But, despite all of this, then Finance Minister Ted Morton still said “no.”

The real problem we’re dealing with can be summed up in one word – ideology. Here in Alberta, we have a government that is dominated by ideological conservatives who are characterized by their reluctance to support public solutions to most social and economic challenges. These ideological conservatives – who also control the Wildrose Alliance and can be found within the ranks of both the Liberal and Alberta parties – are suspicious of using government or any of its agencies as vehicles for promoting the public good.

This is a serious problem for unions and working people because most of our preferred public policy solutions grow out of what can be described as a progressive world view. Progressives believe that, with the right policy direction from elected leaders, government agencies, public services and regulations can (and should) be used as vehicles to protect and promote the public interest.

Public health care, public education, publicly provided municipal services, government regulations in areas like health and safety, environment and consumer protections ... these are all examples of policies and programs that have grown out of a progressive political world view. They are also exactly the kind of programs and services that conservatives mistrust – and often seek to undermine.

The good news is that there is a spectrum of conservative thinking (as there is a spectrum of progressive thinking). So, not all conservative politicians are as rabidly opposed to progressive solutions as, say, Ted Morton. At the same time, conservative politicians, like all politicians, need to get re-elected. So if the public expresses strong support for particular public programs or services, they can often be beaten back from attacking those programs and services (this is what has happened every time Alberta Conservatives have tried to privatize Medicare).

The bad news is that, in a province like Alberta where conservatives have been in charge in one form or another for the past 75 years, it’s always an uphill battle for progressives. To make matters worse, conservatives have been getting more conservative. Leaders like Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Brian Mulroney were more conservative than their predecessors – and the latest crop of conservatives in the U.S. are even more conservative still (can anyone say Sarah Palin and the Tea Party?).

Here in Alberta, the same trends have played out. Ralph Klein and his inner circle were much more conservative in their world view than Peter Lougheed ... and Ted Morton and Danielle Smith are much more conservative than Klein.

As long as this situation persists, the best that we can hope for is to stop their worst ... and occasionally satisfy ourselves with partial victories.

The over-riding importance of Tory politicians' conservative world views helps explain why they keep coming back with new and increasingly more under-handed attacks on public health care – even though Albertans keep saying “no way.”

The lesson for labour and other progressives is clear: If we really want to bring a more progressive approach to public policy, we're going to have to find ways to help elect more progressives, people who share our world view and embrace the same values and priorities that we do. That means unions will have to get more serious about politics. We need to stop simply hoping for the best ... and actually start developing a political machine explicitly designed to get people elected.

Alberta's changing political landscape: Opportunities and threats

If there was ever a time for unions in Alberta to get their political acts together in order to take advantage of opportunities and/or guard against threats, that time is now.

That's because Alberta's decades-old political logjam is breaking up. Support for the Conservative dynasty seems to be fading and Albertans are more open to political change than they have been in at least a generation.

Of course, most of the new political energy percolating in the province seems to be coming from the Wildrose Alliance. This leaves the impression that if Albertans are poised to make a move, it will be further to the right (and further away from the progressive world view that we embrace).

This may end up being the case. But there are at least a few reasons to believe a shift to the right, while seeming to be likely, is not written in stone.

Hopeful signs for progressives can be found in recent polls conducted by Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the ruling Conservatives themselves which clearly show that Albertans value their public services and are even willing to pay higher taxes to make sure they're adequately funded. Hope can also be found in progressive election victories at the municipal level: Edmonton's new public school board; more progressive city council seats in Edmonton and Red Deer; and in the election of Naheed Nenshi in Calgary.

But if there is going to be a swing towards the more progressive end of the political spectrum, it's probably not going to happen by itself. It will need leadership, organization ... and money. And it's hard to think where that leadership, organization and money will come from if not from the labour movement.

Labour movements have risen to similar challenges and produced impressive results elsewhere around the world. In Europe, Australia and South America, unions have been

at the heart of many progressive election victories. Even in the U.S. – which by most definitions is much more conservative than Alberta – research has shown conclusively that politically active unions were the difference that allowed the Democrats to triumph over Republicans in the race to control the U.S. Congress. They were also an important factor that pushed Barack Obama over the top in his race for the U.S. presidency.

On a smaller scale, there's no reason to believe we can't do something similar here for progressive candidates at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.

The need for us to learn from other labour movements is serious and the stakes are high. Leading conservative politicians like Ted Morton and Danielle Smith have made it clear that they believe in things that are anathema to progressives (like private health care).

They have also made it clear they would continue giving energy companies sweetheart deals that rob Albertans of the resources they need. And, if elected, they would also almost certainly follow in the footsteps of their ideological cousins south of the border who are trying to make public-sector unions the scapegoats for problems that were really caused by years and years of failed conservative policies ... the policies of deregulation, trade deals and tax-giveaways to the wealthy that hammered the American middle class paved the way for the global financial crisis.

If we can't help find a way to translate the latent progressive tendencies among Albertans into victories for progressives at the ballot box, we run the very real risk of finding ourselves under siege. If we want to stop the seeds of Wisconsin from taking root here, then we need to get much more serious about electing progressives ... people who can help us become a more effective counterweight to the growing power and influence of self-interested big business and small-hearted conservative ideologues.

Getting Serious: A New Labour Blueprint for Political Action in Alberta

The Alberta Federation of Labour's new blueprint for political action will be built upon the following foundational assumptions:

1. **Politics Matter.** We can ignore politics, but politics won't ignore us. As a result, we need to be involved in politics at all levels (municipal, provincial and federal).
2. **Lobbying and other pressure tactics are necessary – but by themselves they can take us only so far.** We need to lobby, organize, write and rally. All of these things build our base; they weaken the influence of conservatives and they create a friendlier political sea in which progressive politicians can more effectively swim. But, at the end of the day, if we want progressive policies, we need to elect more progressive politicians. Period.

3. **Progressive politicians won't win out of the blue – someone needs to make it happen. And if not unions and union members, who?** Unions are the lynchpin for progressive political success. There is no other effective counterweight to the power and influence of big business and the right-wing establishment.
4. **Politics is a two-way street.** We can't expect progressive politicians to do things for us if we're not prepared to do things for them. In other words, if we deliver for them, they're more likely to deliver for us.
5. **Money matters.** In politics, as in most other things in life, you get what you pay for. If we're not prepared to put money into progressive campaigns, we won't see more progressives elected. And we'll be forced to live with the results.
6. **Targeting works.** Resources are limited so if we really want to make a difference, we have to be disciplined, focused and methodical in the work we do to help elect progressives. We need to be ruthless about putting our resources into the campaigns that have the best chances for success.
7. **We have to take the labour movement as it is, not pretend that it's something that it is not.** Unions that are able to be more outwardly partisan should be encouraged to do so. Unions that can't be outwardly partisan should be encouraged to approach politics in their own way. But all unions should be discouraged from sitting on the sidelines.
8. **Political parties are a fact of life in Canadian politics at the provincial and federal levels.** If our goal is to elect more progressives, then at some point unions and/or union members are going to have to pick sides. That means backing particular candidates from particular parties.
9. **Having said that, political parties should be seen for what they are: Vehicles for achieving political, social and economic objectives. They are a means to an end, not an end in themselves.**
10. **Labour cannot and should not be merely the fundraising arm of any particular party.** We need to be an independent political player that champions the interests of working people. The NDP is the party that unions helped create – but even they should not assume unquestioned support from labour. Support has to be earned. The NDP should be encouraged to see this as an opportunity, not a threat.
11. **Labour's political support should only be given to parties and candidates that share our values, fight for our goals, embrace a partnership with labour and demonstrate a commitment to winning and making real change.**

12. **Political action can be controversial within unions.** But the consequences of not electing progressive candidates are serious for unions and working people. As a result, union leaders have to find the courage to stand up to those within our own ranks who suggest we cannot or should not be involved in electoral politics. They must also find the courage to forcefully explain why some candidates and parties are better than others when it comes to promoting the interests of working people and the broad middle class.
13. **We can't expect change overnight: But we should expect change within the foreseeable future.** It's right and appropriate for unions to expect (and even demand) measurable results in return for their investments in political action.

Building the Machine: A Ten-Point Plan

One: A Labour-Progressive Platform

The AFL, in cooperation with affiliates, will develop a labour-progressive platform to be reviewed annually and at least six months before each provincial election.

The platform will identify a small number of issues which matter most to unions and working people – issues which we would like to see the election fought on. The platform will include specific public policy recommendations that reflect the labour movement's values and are designed to help working people more effectively reach their goals.

The labour-progressive platform for the next provincial election has not yet been determined (it will be set based on consultations between the officers and the AFL Executive Council). But it might look something like this:

- **Health Care:** Keep it public. Defend the laws that keep private insurance out. Commit to providing quality long-term care that is covered by the Medicare umbrella.
- **Revenue:** Alberta needs quality public services. But they don't come for free. It's time to end the sweetheart deals for big energy companies and the super-wealthy. Keep our schools open and our hospitals and universities accessible by making energy companies and the super-wealthy pay their fair share.
- **Energy Policy:** As Albertans, we are the owners of the oil sands and we should decide how it's developed. Keep value-added oil-sands jobs in Canada. Demand that oil-sands development be as green as possible. Use money earned from the oil sands to leverage the creation of a greener economy and greener jobs.

Once finalized, details of the labour-progressive platform will be shared with all political parties (to encourage them to support labour's positions on major issues) and it will be used as a tool to determine whether or not parties and/or candidates should be supported by labour.

Special efforts will be made to work cooperatively with the NDP on development of the platform – in the hopes that they will develop a platform for themselves that mirrors the labour platform.

The AFL, in cooperation with affiliates and the CLC, will also develop a progressive platform for federal elections. The same will be done, in cooperation with affiliates and district labour councils, in advance of municipal and school-board elections.

Affiliate Action: Participate in platform-making process.

Two: Election Issues Campaign

Building on the labour-progressive platform, the AFL will develop a series of election education materials aimed at informing union members about the election and its implications.

The materials will include a website, a Facebook page, leaflets, fact sheets and other documents which explain labour's priorities and analyze where the various parties stand on issues of concern to unions and working people.

The AFL will make use of the most up-to-date and reliable methods (include professional polling) to develop concise, compelling and persuasive language for its election materials. The AFL, in cooperation with affiliates, the CLC and labour councils and civic labour coalitions, will take the same approach with federal and municipal elections.

In between elections, the issues campaign website will remain up – but instead of focusing on a particular election, it will focus on issues that the AFL is working on at that moment and it will encourage members to get involved in lobbying. More generic materials (leaflets, fact sheets, etc.) will also be available so that affiliates can, between elections, continue talking about the need for unions to be involved in electoral politics.

Affiliate Action: Participate in development of core messages for materials and provide financial support for design and production of materials.

Three: Candidate Endorsement and Targeting

Working in close cooperation with affiliates, the AFL will identify a manageable number of ridings in which progressive candidates have a better chance of winning. Priority will be given to ridings that are NOT already held by progressive incumbents (the goal will be

to elect more progressive seats, not simply defend the seats already held by progressives).

Target ridings will be chosen based on a number of criteria, including the following:

1. **Prospects for victory.** If progressives candidates have done well in the riding in the past and if polls and other tools suggest they may do well again, this will a major factor used in determining whether or not a riding should be targeted.
2. **Quality of the candidate.** No candidate will be endorsed who does not support and agree to promote the labour-progressive platform. In practice, this will give an advantage to NDP candidates – but the door will remain open for candidates from other parties to earn labour support by consistently supporting both the labour-progressive platform and the broader goals of the labour movement.
3. **Record of the party.** Regardless of the quality of the candidate and his or her willingness to support the labour-progressive platform, no candidate will be endorsed if his or her party has taken positions contrary to the labour-progressive platform. Evaluating the stance of the party on issues that matter to unions and working people is important because in parliamentary politics, the party usually trumps the candidate. As a result, a candidate who may seem labour-friendly is not really able to be labour-friendly if he or she is ensconced in a party that is not labour-friendly. In practice, this means, for example, that the AFL will never endorse candidates from the Conservatives (who have implemented numerous policies that are at odds with labour values) or the Wildrose Alliance (who have policies that favour private health care and the imposition of restrictions on collective bargaining rights).
4. **Number of union members in the riding or ward.** Constituencies with larger numbers of union members will be given higher priority than those with lower numbers of union members. That's because our goal is to make union turnout (in support of a progressive candidate) a decisive factor in the outcome of the election. With this in mind, unions will be asked to identify and contact their members in target ridings and wards during election campaigns. These members will be told about labour's priorities – and, where possible, they will be encouraged to support (and even volunteer for) labour's preferred candidate. The AFL will work with each union to determine which approach to members in target ridings is best (partisan or non-partisan) but contact will be made.

The AFL, in cooperation with affiliates, the CLC, labour councils and civic labour coalitions, will take the same approach with federal and municipal elections.

Affiliate Action: Affiliates will be asked to participate in the process of identifying targets.

Four: Signing On to the Labour-Progressive Platform

The labour-progressive platform will be combined with a few other statements about the labour movement's values and longer term priorities to create a one-page charter. This charter will then be presented to all candidates. Candidates will be asked to sign the charter as proof that they support the labour-progressive platform and share the values and goals of the labour movement. A full list of all the candidates who have signed the charter and endorsed the labour-progressive platform will be published on the AFL's campaign website. Endorsement of the charter will be necessary for a candidate to receive the targeted support of labour – but not all candidates who sign the Charter will automatically get targeted support. That will only happen after the other endorsement criteria (see previously) are taken into consideration.

Five: Dissemination and Mobilization

Unions will be asked to identify all of their members in target ridings and be prepared to contact them multiple times before and during the election campaign. If they can't already do so, unions will be encouraged to develop the capability to sort their membership lists by provincial and federal ridings and municipal and school board wards. This will facilitate targeted voter contact.

Each union will be responsible for contacting their own members. The AFL's role will be to provide materials (which can be tailored to match each affiliate's needs), messaging advice and coordination. Unions that can work directly with the candidates and their campaigns in target ridings will be encouraged to do so ... others will be asked to do as much as they possibly can to get their members out to the polls in support of labour's preferred candidates.

The AFL, in cooperation with affiliates, the CLC, labour councils and civic labour coalitions, will take a similar approach with federal and municipal elections.

Affiliate Action: Affiliates will be asked to develop membership lists and databases that allow them to identify and contact their members living in target ridings and wards. Affiliates will also be asked to assign a specific person in their organization to take charge of membership contact and work as a liaison with the central AFL campaign. Affiliates will also be asked to be prepared to take responsibility and cover the costs for direct member contact in target ridings (mailing, phoning, etc.)

Six: Direct Support for Candidates – Fundraising

Money is the lifeblood of election campaigns: Without it, progressive candidates simply don't have a chance against corporate-funded Conservative and Wildrose campaigns.

With this in mind, unions and locals that can make direct financial contributions to targeted progressive candidates will be encouraged to do so. For members of non-

partisan unions who understand the importance of backing progressive candidates but can't donate through their unions, the AFL will establish and coordinate a **Donor Network** designed to raise funds from individual union members for use on targeted campaigns.

The AFL will make building and expanding the Donor Network one of its key ongoing jobs. Union members will be asked to sign on to the list at union conventions, meetings and schools. In the months before an election (municipal, school board, provincial or federal), participants in the Donor Network will be contacted and told which ridings or wards have been targeted and which candidates have been endorsed by labour. Members of the Donor Network will then be asked to contribute to target campaigns. Fundraising goals for each target campaign will be set and communicated to members of the Donor Network.

Because of campaign-spending rules, members of the Donor Network will be asked to make their cheques payable to the individual campaigns of candidate who have been endorsed by labour – but they will be asked to send the cheques to the AFL for delivery in order to make it clear to candidates and parties that the money is coming from union members. The hope is that this will reinforce the importance of unions in the eyes of political players and make them more willing to consider and support the issues and suggestions that we champion (and make them more likely to embrace the labour platform).

The AFL's goal is to sign up 1,000 union members for the Donor Network from all of its various affiliates within the next year. The medium-term goal is to have 5,000 people on the list within three years.

Affiliate Action: Affiliates will be asked to share information about the Donor Network with their members so they can make decisions for themselves about whether or not to make donations to progressive election campaigns. Where possible, affiliates (especially those that can't make organizational donations to political campaigns) will be encouraged to actively promote the Donor Network with their members.

Seven: Direct Support for Candidates – Campaign Organizing

In addition to money, election campaigns need organizers. But skilled campaign organizers are a rare commodity. With that in mind, the AFL, in cooperation with affiliates, will identify and train a growing group of people who can be used to help run progressive campaigns. Given the sporadic nature of campaigns, all of these people will have to have "day jobs." That's why our efforts will focus on paid union staff and trusted activists who can be booked off by their unions for training and campaign work. The goal will be to develop a pool of trained organizers who can be made available for campaigns on relatively short notice. The AFL has already started offering a course on campaign organizing at its Jasper School. This will continue. As a result of campaign-spending rules, the organizers will probably have to be paid by campaigns themselves, not by unions. So

the biggest commitment for unions will have to do with the commitment of the staff's and activists' time.

Affiliate Action: Affiliates will be asked to help identify staff and activists who could be targeted to receive training. Unions will also have to be prepared to make these people available for organizing activities when election campaigns are underway.

Eight: Direct Support for Candidates – Voter Contact

The best way to win elections is to talk to as many voters as possible – preferably face to face. Given the size of most wards and ridings, it's simply not realistic to expect candidates to knock on every door themselves. Given the increasingly hectic nature of most people's lives, it's also not reasonable to expect volunteers to pick up the slack. But a campaign can come close to full coverage if it makes use of trained and paid door-knockers. This is a tactic that is increasingly being used by conservative politicians. It's also being used with success by progressive candidates in other provinces and other countries (e.g., Australia and the U.S.). With this in mind, the AFL will train a team of between 10 and 20 “professional” voter contact people (sometimes referred to as “poll cats”). Between elections, the AFL will keep these workers (most of whom will be students or active seniors) busy doing part-time and temporary work on issues campaigns. During election campaigns, they will be rotated through various target ridings where they will be used to bolster the direct voter contact efforts of each campaign.

Affiliate Action: Affiliates will help pay for labour's “poll cat” team through increased funding to the AFL.

Nine: Direct Support for Candidates – Research and Messaging

If we want to help elect progressives and keep them progressive after they've won, then we need to develop on-going relationships with them. In other words, we need to be useful to progressive politicians both during elections and between elections as well. With this in mind, the AFL will develop a formal system for outreach to progressive candidates and incumbents at all three levels (municipal, provincial and federal).

This system will have three components. First, the AFL will conduct regular polls (annually and before election) aimed at finding out which issues and language can be used to help progressives win election. This polling information will be shared with progressive candidates and incumbents (to help them win, to help them do their jobs more effectively, and to give them the courage to be progressive in a traditionally conservative province).

Second, the AFL will compile an e-mail list of all progressive incumbents in the province (at all three levels) and will start sending the monthly e-mails sharing new research we think they should be aware of.

And third, the AFL will hold an annual day-long conference where all progressive candidates and incumbents on our lists will be invited to hear presentations on topics that will help them be more effective as progressive advocates (topics could include the latest on polling, progressive messaging, etc.) The meeting will also provide an important opportunity for union leaders to network with progressive politicians (and would-be politicians) at all levels. Such interactions will build bonds of trust and friendship that will be beneficial for both unions and progressive politicians.

Affiliate Action: Affiliates will help pay for the outreach plan (mostly polling and the cost of the annual conference) through increased funding to the AFL. Affiliates will also be encouraged to actively participate in the annual conference. The conference will provide an important opportunity for progressive politicians to get to know labour leaders and activists in an informal setting and *vice versa*.

Ten: Identify and Develop Our Own Candidates

The final component of the AFL's new plan for political action has to do with candidates. Up until now, we've focused on choosing amongst the candidates who present themselves. That's fine – to a point. What if no one comes forward who really understands labour or fully embraces our values and ideas? That's why the AFL is suggesting that the labour movement do more to identify and develop its own candidates – not just in the one or two months before an election, but over the long haul. As a step in this direction, the AFL will begin offering two courses at its annual school aimed at helping labour activists become progressive elected officials at all levels. The first course will be called "Running for Office" (or something like that) and will focus on how activists can best prepare themselves to be successful candidates. The second course will be called "Talking Our Values" (or something like that) and will give advice about how to more effectively communicate progressive values and ideas in a conservative climate.

Affiliate Action: Affiliates will be asked to support this initiative by identifying people within their ranks (or who they know in the broader community) who might make good candidates.